

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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R 161225Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1228

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

USINT ALGIERS BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 0537

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LY EG

SUBJECT: LIBYAN-EGYPTIANS RELATIONS

REF: CAIRO 3151

1. FROM HERE, JUDGING FROM PUBLIC RECORD, EVIDENCE OF LIBYAN BACKING OR FOREKNOWLEDGE OF MILITARY ACADEMY ATTACK PROVIDED BY EGYPTIANS SEEMS LESS THAN CONCLUSIVE. LIBYAN FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT REFUTING INVOLVEMENT IN ATTACK ADMITS THAT APPARENT RINGLEADER, SIRRIYAH, MET LAST IN APRIL 1973 WITH QADHAFI, TOGETHER WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER "PALESTINIAN PERSONALITIES", BUT EGYPTIAN CHARGES THAT SARRIYAH WAS GIVEN A LIBYAN PASSPORT AND OTHER LIBYAN SUPPORT DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PROVEN, AT LEAST NOT YET. IN THIS CASE, WE ARE INCLINED TO TAKE QADHAFI'S PROTESTATIONS OF INJURED
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INNOCENCE PRETTY MUCH AT FACE VALUE. QADHAFI IS NO

RESPECTER OF NATIONAL BOUNDARIES, OF COURSE, AND IN PRESENT POISONED ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES HE MAY WELL BE PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO DISSIDENT GROUPS IN EGYPT, AS HE HAS DONE ELSEWHERE.

2. EGYPTIAN-LIBYAN RIFT HAS DEEPER CAUSES THAN SADAT-QADHAFI QUARREL, DIFFERENCES OVER TACTICS AND UNITY, OR EVEN ALLEGED LIBYAN INVOLVEMENT OF MILITARY ACADEMY ATTACK. QADHAFI (AND APPARENTLY OTHER LIBYAN LEADERS, INCLUDING JALLUD) IS COMMITTED TO HOPELESS NEGATIVISM OF PAST, AND TOTAL VICTORY OVER ISRAEL, PUTTING HIM IN DIRECT CONFLICT WITH SADAT. SINCE HE IS NOT LIKELY TO ABANDON THIS COMMITMENT, CONFLICT SEEMS LIKELY TO GET WORSE RATHER THAN BETTER.

3. IN ANY TEST OF STRENGTH, EGYPTIANS LIVING IN LIBYA WOULD BE ELEMENT BOTH SIDES WOULD HAVE TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION. THE LATEST INFORMED ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF EGYPTIANS IN LIBYA WHICH WE HAD FROM EGYPTIAN CHARGE IS 150,000. MURAD GHALEB'S ESTIMATE OF 500,000, WHICH HAS BEEN CITED IN PAST, APPEARS MUCH TOO HIGH, BUT IN ANY CASE THEIR NUMBERS ARE SUBSTANTIAL. MANY ARE LABORERS IN BUILDING TRADES AND CONSTRUCTION OR MAKE UP RETAIL WORK FORCE, WHILE OTHERS ARE ADVISORS TO LIBYANS CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ADMINISTRATION, INCLUDING IN EXECUTIVE OFFICES OF RCC ITSELF. IN ANY TEST OF STRENGTH BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES, EGYPTIAN POPULATION COULD BE USED AS A REDOUBTABLE FIFTH COLUMN WITHIN LIBYA. EGYPTIAN COLONY IS ALSO HOSTAGE OF KIND, ALTHOUGH IN THEIR OWN TERMS LIBYANS WOULD HAVE HARD TIME JUSTIFYING ANY ACTION AGAINST BROTHER ARABS. WE HAVE HEARD NO RECENT REPORTS OF TROUBLE. ITS EXISTENCE IS A RESTRAINING FACTOR ON BOTH PARTIES, PRESUMABLY.
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